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### III.—*Notes on Elizabethan Prose.*

By JAMES M. GARNETT, M. A., LL. D.,

PROFESSOR OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN THE  
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA.

The progress of English prose is a subject of great interest, and one that has not as yet been thoroughly treated from the historical point of view. Here, as elsewhere in literary, as well as scientific subjects, the inductive method must be employed, and by selection and comparison the advance made from century to century may be indicated. Any treatment of the subject making the smallest pretension to fullness should begin at least as early as the second half of the fourteenth century, with the prose of WYCLIF and his contemporaries, after the native and foreign elements of the language had become so blended into one that what was once foreign was no longer felt to be so. The progress should be traced through the fifteenth century, marked by the names of MANDEVILLE—whose so-called ‘Travels’ has at last found its true historical position,—PECOCK, MALORY and CAXTON, to the first half of the sixteenth century, when prose-writers become more numerous, and the language becomes more flexible and better suited to the purposes of prose, as seen in the writings of SIR THOMAS MORE and his controversial opponent, WILLIAM TYNDALE, SIR THOMAS ELYOT, whose “Booke called the Governour” is a real land-mark of English prose, BISHOP HUGH LATIMER, the most forcible and witty preacher of his time, and ROGER ASCHAM, who connects the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth, and who deliberately uses English for his works, although it would have been “more easier” for him to write in Latin.

The present paper makes no such pretensions as those indicated above. Its object is merely to put together certain notes on readings in some of the prose-writings of the Elizabethan age, including in this term its inseparable companion, the reign of the “royal pedant,” and prolonging it into that of his unfortunate son, for even MILTON is “the last of the Elizabethans.”

In studying the prose of the reign of Elizabeth, it is natural to begin with that work whose publication marked an era in the history of English prose almost as notable as that marked in poetry by its exact contemporary, SPENSER’S ‘Shepherd’s Calendar,’ that is, the ‘Euphues’ of JOHN LYLY (1579–80).

It is now twenty years since PROFESSOR ARBER made this work accessible to the general public in his valuable series of 'English Reprints.' PROFESSOR HENRY MORLEY had given us an interesting study of "Euphuism" in the *Quarterly Review* for April, 1861. DR. WEYMOUTH followed with his study of "Euphuism" in the *Transactions of the Philological Society of London* for 1870-72, but the part containing his paper is unfortunately out of print and I have been unable to procure access to it. DR. LANDMANN, of Giessen, published his "Shakespeare and Euphuism" in the *New Shakespeare's Society's Transactions* for 1880-82, and he has more recently summed up the chief characteristics of Euphuism in the Introduction to his selections from "Euphuus and the Arcadia" published in *Englische Sprach- und Literaturdenkmale*; and MR. SAINTSBURY has well, though briefly, criticized Euphuism in the second chapter of his 'History of Elizabethan Literature.' With the thin thread of thought contained in the plot, or story, of 'Euphuus' I have nothing to do. The time of writing good plots for fiction was "not yet." It is altogether with the language, the style, the manner of expression, that I am concerned. Moreover, I shall not stop upon the misconceptions that have prevailed concerning Euphuism, the attempted caricature by SHAKSPEARE or SIR WALTER SCOTT. It is not difficult to seize upon some peculiar mannerism of a writer, extravagantly exaggerate it, and call that his style; but we should neither exaggerate nor "extenuate, nor set down aught in malice." DR. LANDMANN finds in 'Euphuus' a direct imitation of the style of the Spanish writer GUEVARA, and not only of the style, but of the contents of GUEVARA'S 'Life of Marcus Aurelius,' after PLUTARCH, which was translated into English by SIR THOMAS NORTH, the translator of 'Plutarch's Lives' also. Twenty years ago PROFESSOR DOWDEN informed PROFESSOR ARBER that 'Euphuus and his Ephæbus,' the excellent treatise "Of the education of youth," was taken from PLUTARCH, and this has been confirmed by LANDMANN, from NORTH'S translation, after GUEVARA, of the 'Dial of Princes,' the second book of which "is an imitation of PLUTARCH'S book, 'De educatione puerorum.'"

What, then, are the elements of this style that GUEVARA claimed as his own, that LYLÿ popularized in English, and that held sway for some time as the fashionable style in English prose? LANDMANN regards LYLÿ'S metaphors as in most

instances not exaggerated or affected, his words as genuine English, and his ideas as sound and reasonable. "It is," says he, "the grammatical structure, the syntax, that strikes us at once as excessively artificial. We here have the most elaborate antithesis, not only of well-balanced sentences, but also of words, often even of syllables. LYL<sup>y</sup> is averse to plain single sentences; he prefers twin phrases, parallel clauses, either in juxtaposition or in antithesis." Other elements peculiar to LYL<sup>y</sup>'s style are "alliteration, consonance, rhyme, playing upon words, and the use of syllables sounding alike," and a peculiar characteristic of the alliteration is that it is often transverse, as DR. WEYMOUTH termed it, or alternate, as I think it might be termed; for example, "Although hitherto I have shrined thee in my heart for a trusty friend, I will shunne thee heerafter as a trothles foe" (LANDMANN, p. xvi.). Again, says LANDMANN, LYL<sup>y</sup> makes use of "a long series of illustrations, comparisons, examples, and short similes, taken from ancient history and mythology, from daily life, and from PLINY'S Natural History, translating PLINY literally."

These, then, are the chief elements that critics find as characteristic of LYL<sup>y</sup>'s style. But it seems to me that they select certain examples from LYL<sup>y</sup>'s work in which these characteristics are prominent, and overlook the fact that, notwithstanding such attributes, a great part of it is written in a clear, easy, natural and pure style, which, barring an occasional quaint word, or form, would scarcely be thought three hundred years old. Let us take a paragraph from his commendation of "Euphues and his England" "to the Ladies and Gentlewomen of England," for LYL<sup>y</sup> wrote for the ladies, and expected them to read and enjoy his work:—"It resteth, Ladies, that you take paines to read it, but at such times as you spend playing with your little Dogges, and yet will I not pinch you of that pastime, for I am content that your Dogges lye in your laps, so *Euphues* may be in your hands, that when you shall be wearie in reading of the one, you may be ready to sport with the other: or handle him as you do your Iunckets, that, when you can eate no more, you tye some in your napkin for children, for if you be filled with the first part, put the second in your pocket for your wayting Maydes. *Euphues* had rather lye shut in a Ladyes casket then open in a Schollers studie." (ARBER, p. 220). Time has, however, relegated LYL<sup>y</sup>'s book to the scholar's study, for it cannot compete with the latest novel. We find in this paragraph a certain

balance of sentence and a tendency to alliteration, but neither to an objectionable extent, nor, if carried no further, in any way remarkable.

Yet LVLV did not pride himself upon the style, but rather upon the matter, of his book. In the Dedication of the second edition (1581) to LORD DE LA WARRE, he says:—"Though the stile nothing delight the daintie eare of the curious sifter, yet will the matter recreate the minde of the curteous Reader; the varietie of the one will abate the harshnesse of the other. Things of greatest profit are set forth with least price; where the wine is neat (i. e. pure) there needeth no Ivi bush; the right Corall needeth no coloring; where the matter itselfe bringeth credit, the man with his glose (i. e. gloss or interpretation; also, flattery) winneth small commendation (p. 203)." Here balance and alliteration are more evident, and a tendency to illustration by means of proverbs. This tendency of LVLV's is, I think, subjected to ridicule by SHAKSPERE in 'Romeo and Juliet,' for we find in this very dedication: "The shomaker must not go above his latchet, nor the Hedger meddle with anything but his bil (i. e., axe) It is unseemly for the Painter to feather a shafte or the Fletcher to handle the pencill:" and SHAKSPERE puts into the mouth of Capulet's servant what would serve for a good burlesque upon this passage: "It is written that the shoemaker should meddle with his yard and the tailor with his last, the fisher with his pencil and the painter with his nets." (I. 2. 40). Other passages of 'Romeo and Juliet' remind us of 'Euphues,' so that not only in 'Love's Labor's Lost' do we find illustrations of Shaksperian Euphuism. LVLV's disposition to "something affect the letter" is carried to an extreme in such sentences as the following: "Thus farre I am bold, gentlemen, to counsel those that be coy that they weave not the net of their own woe, nor spinne the threede of their own thraldome, by their own overthwartnes (i. e. wrongheadedness) (p. 55.)" But after making all allowances for LVLV's fondness for alliteration and antithesis, let us give him credit for certain qualities of style that are manifest in his work, that is, clearness, simplicity, force, even sometimes rising to beauty of expression, and much less "harshness" than is found in his predecessors. This plainness and clearness of speech is seen especially in the second part of his work and in the last section, "Euphues Glasse for Europe," where he holds up England to the admiration of the ladies of Italy,—doubtless with pardonable exaggeration of

the good qualities of the English ladies,—and particularly where he lavishes praise upon Queen Elizabeth. One or two examples must suffice. After contrasting the ladies of England and of Italy, much to the disadvantage of the latter, LYL<sup>y</sup> asks: "Is it not then a shame, Ladyes, that that little island shoulde be a myrrour to you, to Europe, to the whole world? . . . . Learn Ladies, though late yet at length, that the chiefest title of honour in earth is to give all honour to him that is in heaven, that the greatest braverie (i. e. finery) in this worlde is to be burning lampes in the worlde to come, that the clearest beautie in this life, is to be amiable to him that shall give life eternall. Looke in the Glasse of England, too bright I fear me for your eyes; what is there in your sex that they have not and what that you should not have? (p. 446.)" And in praise of the Queen he instances the following: "I myselfe being in England when hir majestie was for hir recreation in hir Barge upon ye Thames, hard of a Gun that was shotte off, though of the partie unwittingly, yet to hir noble person dangerously, which fact she most graciously pardoned, accepting a just excuse before a great amends, taking more grieve for hir poore Bargeman, that was a little hurt, then care for hir selfe that stooode in greatest hasarde. O rare example of pittie, O singuler spectacle of pietie!" (p. 453). And thus he continues: "Infinite were the ensamples that might be alledged, and almost incredible, whereby shee hath shewed hir selfe a Lambe in meeknesse when she had cause to be a Lion in might, proved a Dove in favour, when she was provoked to be an Eagle in fiercenesse, requiting injuries with benefits, revenging grudges with gifts, in highest majestie bearing the lowest minde, forgiving all that sued for mercie and forgetting all that deserved Iustice." (p. 454.) Whatever we may think of the historical correctness of the portraiture, we must acknowledge that it is a simple and elegant tribute to the character of the Queen as a courtier saw it.

If this paper were confined to a consideration of LYL<sup>y</sup>'s 'Euphues,' many other examples might be given of his clearness, simplicity, and even beauty of style, his wealth of vocabulary of pure English, his "Englishness," if I may borrow a term applied by "Matthew Browne" to CHAUCER. LYL<sup>y</sup> prefers short sentences to long ones, and with him we seldom find the subject left loose, poised in mid-air as it were, and searching in vain for its predicate; or *per contra* a predicate at

a loss for its immediate subject. His sentences will parse, no undesirable quality in some of the writings of this age, and they hang well together. We find occasional archaisms, such as the double comparative and superlative, plural subject with a singular verb, adverbial use of *nothing*, relative use of *as* after other demonstratives than *such*, and use of *as* with *when*, etc., use of *whether* as a pronoun, impersonal use of *like*, and others,—all of which may be paralleled from SHAKSPERE and belonged to the language of the time. We find even such a modern blunder as the use of auxiliaries with the wrong verbal complement; as, "England hath all those yat *can* and *have wrestled* with al others" (p. 441), but one can scarcely pick up a newspaper that has not the same blunder now. We meet, too, with words now obsolete or used in an obsolete sense; as, *silh*, *tickle*, *domesticall*, *maculate*, *feare*=frighten, *escapes*=mistakes, *snort*=snore,—to mention but a few. Taking into consideration the time when LYLY wrote, I do not think that any careful reader will deny to him the praise awarded by his contemporary JOHN ELIOT, in a French sonnet prefixed to GREENE'S 'Perimedes, The Blacke Smith' (1588), (quoted in full in ARBER'S Introduction):

"Greene et Lylli tous deux raffineurs de l'Anglois,"

even if one might not concur with his Latin eulogist,

"Tullius Anglorum nunc vivens Lillius."

I pass now to LYLY'S more distinguished contemporary, SIR PHILIP SIDNEY, who has left us the 'Arcadia' and the little pamphlet, "An Apologie for Poetrie," as examples of his prose style. LANDMANN has printed the first chapter of the first book of the 'Arcadia' along with his selections from 'Euphues,' and has summed up the chief elements of SIDNEY'S style. He thinks that "although SIDNEY may have been a Euphuist at court, he avoided it entirely in his 'Arcadia,' written between 1580-86," and that the publication of the 'Arcadia,' in 1590 detracted much from the reputation of 'Euphues.' He finds the chief elements of style in the 'Arcadia' to consist in "endless tedious sentences, one sometimes filling a page, in the fondness for details, and in the description of the beauties of rural scenery;" also in "comparisons and conceits couched in excessively metaphorical language, quaint circumlocutions for simple expressions and bold personifications of inanimate objects." "Besides," says he, "Sidney is fond of playing upon words, and is not averse to *simple* alliteration, but he avoids LYLY'S

artificial combination of parisonic antithesis with *transverse* alliteration, as well as his absurd similes taken from Pliny;" so he concludes that SIDNEY's "style and diction are certainly affected, but his language has, nevertheless, its charms, and has decidedly won the ascendancy over LYLly's more artificial extravagance."—The source of the 'Arcadia' is affirmed to be the 'Diana' of MONTEMAYOR, not the 'Arcadia' of SANNAZARO, except as to title. This is proved, says LANDMANN, at a glance. "The style is the same in both, even the same ideas occur." "Sidney also translated some of the songs of the 'Diana';" and some other points of resemblance are noted. On the general question of the influence of Italian prose upon English writers, LANDMANN thinks that it "was neither deeply felt, nor was it injurious." It would be interesting for some Spanish scholar to trace more thoroughly and directly the indebtedness of English prose of the reign of Elizabeth to the Spanish writers.

The 'Apologie for Poetrie,'—which PROFESSOR ARBER has made generally accessible, (although I was surprised to find, by comparison of ARBER's 'Reprint' with an edition of 1724, that it has some omissions),—is usually considered a better specimen of SIDNEY's prose style than the 'Arcadia.' It is, perhaps, freer from the faults of the latter work, which have been well characterized by MR. SAINTSBURY. He says: "If Sidney's vocabulary is not Latinised or Italianised or Lylyfied, he was one of the greatest of sinners in the special Elizabethan sin of convoluting and entangling his phrases; . . . so as to say the simplest thing in the least simple manner. . . . Yet again, he is one of the arch offenders in the matter of spoiling the syntax of the sentence and the paragraph. . . . Sidney was one of the first writers of great popularity and influence to introduce what may be called the sentence-and-paragraph heap, in which clause is linked on to clause till not merely the grammatical, but the philosophical integer is hopelessly lost sight of in a tangle of jointings, and appendices." . . . "The faults of 'Euphues,'" he thinks, "were faults which were certain to work their own cure: those of the 'Arcadia' were so engaging in themselves, and linked with so many merits and beauties, that they were sure to set a dangerous example." ('History of Elizabethan Literature,' pp. 42, 43.) I must concur with MR. SAINTSBURY in these criticisms, nor do I think that many "purple patches" make amends for a deficiency in syntactical clearness. Perhaps



one reason why DR. LANDMANN seems to give the preference to the style of SIDNEY over that of LYLly is that it is more similar to that of the native German unpurified by contact with French and English writers. (Vide DE QUINCEY'S *Hist. and Crit. Essays*, in Vol. ii.) Criticism of KANT, Essay on "Style."

But let us test the matter by a few specimens of SIDNEY'S style, that is, if it is ever right to judge an author by short examples, which, however well they may serve for illustration of particular points, can never give a correct idea of the writer's general style. Let us take the opening sentence of the 'Arcadia,' as given in LANDMANN'S selections :—

"It was in the time that the earth begins to put on her new apparel against the approach of her lover, and that the sun running a most even course becomes an indifferent arbiter between the night and the day; when the hopelesse shepheard *Strephon* was come to the sandes, which lie against the Island of Cithera; where viewing the place with a heavy kinde of delight, and sometimes casting his eyes to the Ileward, he called his friendly rivall, the pastor *Claius* unto him, and setting first downe in his darkened countenance a doleful copie of what he would speake: O my *Claius*, said he, hether we are now come to pay the rent, for which we are so called unto by over-busie Remembrance, Remembrance, restlesse Remembrance, which claymes not onely this dutie of us, but it will have us forget ourselves."

It almost takes one's breath away to read a fourteen-line opening sentence, with relative clause strung on to relative clause. Here we find metaphorical conceits, and even the alternate alliteration for which LYLly is so condemned; and,—to quote but a part of the next sentence, "Did Remembrance graunt us any holiday, eyther for pastime or devotion, nay either for necessary foode or naturall rest? but that still it forced our thoughts to worke upon this place, where we last (alas that the word last should so long last) did gaze our eyes upon her ever-florishing beautie," etc.,—where shall we find in LYLly a worse-sounding play upon words and alliteration combined? This play upon words was, however, a common characteristic of Elizabethan language, and SHAKSPERE himself is a very grievous offender in this respect. What can be worse than Mercutio's chaffing of Romeo and Romeo's retorts?

But SIDNEY'S style is faulty not only in its long sentences. The chief fault I should find with it, is its lack of correct syntax;

subjects appear to be forgotten before the corresponding predicates are introduced; predicates are frequently found with no subjects expressed, and they must be inferred from the context; and sometimes the subject is so far removed from the predicate by intervening clauses that it is difficult to make the connection, for example: "But the fishermen, when they came so neere him, that it was time to throwe out a rope, by which hold they might draw him, their simplicity bred such amasement, and their amasement such a superstition, that (assuredly thinking it was some God begotten betweene *Neptune* and *Venus* that had made all this terrible slaughter) as they went under sayle by him, held up their hands, and made their prayers." We finally discover that it was the fishermen who "held up their hands and made their prayers," but only after the intervention of no less than six dependent sentences and a parenthetical clause; and moreover, the principal subject has no predicate, and the principal predicate no subject expressed. This remarkable sentence continues for ten lines further, beginning with the Latinism, "Which when *Musidorus* sawe, though he were almost as much ravished with joy, as they with astonishment, he left to the Mariner, and tooke the rope out of his hande and," etc.;—but enough has been quoted for my purpose. It reminds one of the familiar expression of CÆSAR, "*Quae quum ita sint*," that school-boys are so fond of translating with exact literalness, order and all. However good for Latin, it will not answer for English.

Let us glance for a moment at the 'Apologie for Poetrie.' SIDNEY sums up the first part of his argument with a sentence nearly a page long, no less than eight successive dependent sentences beginning with the conjunction *sith* (i. e. since), but we will let that pass, as it is the conclusion of one section and opening of another. I have already stated that the style of the 'Apologie' is considered better than that of the 'Arcadia.' Its syntax is less involved; it is clearer and simpler; it is freer from conceits; and while naturally containing archaic words and phrases of the time, it is, looked at from a modern standpoint, more correct. We meet, however, with alliteration, as "a great many wandering wordes" (ARBER, p. 49); "by styrring the Spleene may stay the braine;" "confute others knowledge before they confirme theyr owne,"—all within a few lines; and we find some phrases that would offend the ears of our modern rhetoricians, "of al other learnings" (p. 48); "those kinde of

objections" (p. 49); "without we will say" (p. 52); and twice in close connection the good old idiom "I had much rather," which some of our neo-grammarians are trying to rule out of the language, but which is found in all periods of good English, as DR. FITZEDWARD HALL has well shown (*Amer. Jour. of Phil.*, ii, 281). But SIDNEY cannot always straighten out his syntax, even in a short sentence, as (p. 59); "Of the other side, who wold shew the honors, have been by the best sort of iudgements granted them, a whole Sea of examples woulde present themselves." This sentence is an example of the extreme elliptical style, for we find that not only is there an ellipsis of the antecedent *those* of the relative *who*, but also an ellipsis of the relative subject *which* referring to *honors*, and the reader is expected to supply them for himself. We may be permitted to apply to SIDNEY's syntax his own expression concerning *Gorboduc*, of which SIDNEY had a high opinion, yet because it violated the unities, he thought that it was, in truth, "very defectious in the circumstances." SIDNEY's vocabulary, however, deserves all the praise that has been bestowed upon it. It is pure English, and it is very rare that in either LVLV or SIDNEY we find those Latin formations, as the above *defectious*, which were the bane of the prose style of the seventeenth century, even that of MILTON included, and for relief from which we are indebted to the good hard common sense of DRYDEN and his immediate successors. SIDNEY deserves credit, too, for having appreciated the excellencies of his own language. Speaking of the diction of Poetry, he passes to that of Oratory, but soon checks himself as follows (p. 69): "But what? Me thinkes I deserve to be pounded for straying from Poetrie to Oratorie: but both have such an affinity in this wordish consideration, that I thinke this digression will make my meaning receive the fuller understanding, which is not to take upon me to teach Poets howe they should doe, but onely finding myselfe sick among the rest, to shewe one or two spots of the common infection growne among the most part of Writers: that acknowledging our selves somewhat awry, we may bend to the right use both of matter and manner; whereto our language gyveth us great occasion, beeing indeed capable of any excellent exercising of it. I know, some will say it is a mingled language. And why not so much the better, taking the best of both the other? Another will say, it wanteth Grammer. Nay truly, it hath that prayse that it wanteth not Grammer: for

Grammer it might have, but it needes it not; beeing so easie of it selfe, and so voyd of those cumbersome differences of Cases, Genders, Moodes, and Tenses, which I thinke was a peece of the Tower of *Babilons* curse, that a man should be put to schoole to learne his mother-tongue. But for the uttering sweetly and properly the conceits of the minde, which is the end of speech, that hath it equally with any other tongue in the world: and is particulerly happy in compositions of two or three words together, neere the Greeke, far beyond the Latine: which is one of the greatest beauties can be in a language." The trouble with SIDNEY was that he did not realize that grammar consisted in something more than "cumbersome differences of cases, genders, moodes and tenses," and that the lack of these made all the more necessary a careful attention to verbal order and correct syntactical construction.

But it is now time to consider that writer who made the greatest advance of all writers of the reign of Elizabeth towards the formation of a really good English prose style, "the judicious Hooker." HOOKER has been often praised for first treating an abstruse philosophical subject in English and not in Latin, and he deserves all the credit that can be awarded him; for he preceded BACON and differed from him, too, in that BACON thought it necessary to translate even his English works into Latin that his fame might be perpetuated to posterity. Had HOOKER written in Latin, his great work would have been relegated to the limbo of forgotten books, and English literature would have been deprived of its first modern prose writer that is still universally read and admired. DEAN CHURCH, in the Introduction to his edition of the first book of HOOKER'S 'Ecclesiastical Polity,' (C. P. SERIES), the book which is of general interest and which was published with three others in 1594, says of HOOKER'S writings that "they mark an epoch at once in the history of English thought and in the progress of the English language," that "Hooker, like Shakespeare and Bacon, may be said to have opened a new vein in the use of the English language"; furthermore, that "Hooker is really the beginner of what deserves to be called English literature, in its theological and philosophical province." These statements are not exaggerated. Let anyone read the literature of the time, even the best of its prose, that of LYLly and SIDNEY, and then take up the 'Ecclesiastical Polity.' Although these writers mark an advance in English prose, HOOKER at one leap went far

beyond them. It is a marvel where he got his style from. He had no model; he evolved from his own consciousness the phraseology and expression that so well suited his weighty thoughts. That he should have been to some extent under the influence of the Latin and Greek writers who formed the subjects of his daily studies was in no way remarkable. What is remarkable is that he should have so succeeded in transferring the gist of his studies into such pure and idiomatic English. HOOKER'S style has, I think, been depreciated by PROFESSOR MINTO. DEAN CHURCH'S views seem to me more critical. He says of HOOKER'S work: "It first revealed to the world what English prose might be: its power of grappling with difficult conceptions and subtle reasonings, of bringing information and passion to animate and illuminate severe thought, of suiting itself to the immense variety of lights and moods and feelings which really surround and accompany the work of the mind; its power of attracting and charming like poetry, its capacity for a most delicate or most lofty music. The men who first read the early books of Hooker must have felt that their mother-tongue had suddenly appeared in a form which might bear comparison with the great classical models for force or beauty." DEAN CHURCH refers to the statement of SWIFT that HOOKER "had written English so naturally and simply that his works survived the changes of fashion, and could be read without offence in the days of Addison and Pope."

The qualities of HOOKER'S style that will first strike the reader are, I think, its smoothness of expression and compactness of structure. HOOKER sometimes used long sentences, but they are well constructed. The long sentences of HOOKER and those of SIDNEY are as far apart as the antipodes. Had HOOKER written like SIDNEY, it would have been a labor to disinter his thought. On the contrary, HOOKER is always clear in style, even when the thought itself is abstruse. With him the thought is the main element, not, as with LYLIV, the manner of expression, and the style fits the thought. The expression is always forcible and sometimes elegant. His vocabulary is pure and copious; there are very few obsolete words and there are comparatively few Latinisms. That the style has an archaic cast, and that there is occasional quaintness in expression, is to be expected. To look for anything else is to expect an Elizabethan to write like a Victorian, and to overlook three hundred years of progress in English prose. Is then HOOKER'S style perfect?

Has it no faults? Viewed from a modern standpoint, it has some peculiarities to which exception might be taken. That one which I think will first attract attention is HOOKER's fondness for inversion, evidently derived from his familiarity with Latin writings. While inversion is often forcible, and therefore permissible on occasion, as it gives the emphatic position to the emphatic word, it may be easily carried too far. Also, there are occasional ellipses, especially of the substantive verb and of the relative pronoun, which the reader is left to supply, but that is easily done. HOOKER frequently uses the personal pronoun as antecedent to the relative, where we should use the demonstrative; as, *them who, them whom, them which*, referring to persons, and even includes the antecedent in the possessive; as, "*their brutishness which imagine*," but these expressions are familiar to every reader of SHAKSPERE. Again, we find two subjects with a singular verb, "*force and injury* 'was offered;'" *except* used as a conjunction, "*except they gave their common consent*;" *of* in the sense of *from*, "*who of fathers were made rulers*;" even such a rhetorical bugbear as "*those kind of positive laws*" (already noticed in SIDNEY and found in SHAKSPERE,); *not this for this is not*; such expressions as *laws politic, laws human, any other the like, every of these three kinds, by any their several laws*, etc., and such words as *commonweal, regiment, domestical, moe, sith, sithence, overpotent, instancy*, etc. But it is not worth while to enumerate words and expressions belonging to the Elizabethan age, of which a long list might be made even from the First Book, for they simply serve to give to the style a quaintness and an archaic flavor that are very attractive.

Let us take a few specimens of the way in which HOOKER expresses his thoughts, and especially of his management of short and long sentences; we may select almost at random and must be brief; forexample (CHURCH, Bk. I, p. 51): "All men desire to lead in this world a happy life. That life is led most happily wherein all virtue is exercised without impediment or let. The Apostle, in exhorting men to contentment although they have in this world no more than very bare food and raiment, giveth us thereby to understand that those are even the lowest of things necessary; that if we should be stripped of all those things without which we might possibly be, yet these must be left; that destitution in these is such an impediment as, till it be removed, suffereth not the mind of man to admit any other care.

For this cause, first God assigned Adam maintenance of life, and then appointed him a law to observe. For this cause, after men began to grow to a number, the first thing we read they gave themselves unto was the tilling of the earth and the feeding of cattle. Having by this mean whereon to live, the principal actions of their life afterward are noted by the exercise of their religion. True it is that the Kingdom of God must be the first thing in our purposes and desires. But inasmuch as righteous life presupposeth life; inasmuch as to live virtuously it is impossible except we live; therefore the first impediment, which naturally we endeavor to remove, is penury and want of things without which we cannot live." One is inclined to add "Q. E. D." to this clear and simple logical exposition.

Let us now take a long sentence of somewhat higher style, his eulogy of faith, hope and charity as revealed in the law of God (p. 78):—"Concerning faith, the principal object whereof is that eternal verity which hath discovered the treasures of hidden wisdom in Christ; concerning hope, the highest object whereof is that everlasting goodness which in Christ doth quicken the dead; concerning charity, the final object whereof is that incomprehensible beauty which shineth in the countenance of Christ, the Son of the living God: concerning these virtues, the first of which, beginning here with a weak apprehension of things not seen, endeth with the intuitive vision of God in the world to come; the second, beginning here with a trembling expectation of things far removed and as yet but only heard of, endeth with real and actual fruition of that which no tongue can express; the third, beginning here with a weak inclination of heart towards him unto whom we are not able to approach, endeth with endless union, the mystery whereof is higher than the reach of the thoughts of men; concerning that faith, hope and charity, without which there can be no salvation,—was there ever any mention made saving only in that law which God himself hath from heaven revealed? There is not in the world a syllable muttered with certain truth concerning any of these three more than hath been supernaturally received from the mouth of the eternal God."

What modern writer might not envy the grand tone of this simple climax, the elegant expression of thoughts as fresh now as when first uttered, in language as easily intelligible as if three hundred years did not separate it from to-day! It is hard to realize that this book was probably written in the year of SID-

NEY's death, and but five or six years after the 'Euphues' and the 'Arcadia.' It would seem as if a century should have intervened to secure such progress in English prose.

I must hurry on to notice briefly HOOKER's great contemporary, who has also left his mark upon English prose. In 1597, three years after the publication of the 'Ecclesiastical Polity,' appeared the first ten 'Essays' of FRANCIS BACON, enlarged to forty in the edition of 1612, and to fifty-eight in that of 1625, the year before BACON's death. From PROFESSOR ARBER's parallel-text edition it can be easily seen how each essay grew under BACON's revision and enlargement. It is usual to take these essays as specimens of BACON's English style, comment on them, and advise students to read them. Now, while BACON's Essays are very valuable for the condensed thought that they contain, it does not seem to me that they can be praised for their style. The nature of the work forbids it. The style is highly aphoristic, and consists in putting into as small compass as possible as much thought as possible, and there is no room for graces of style. By comparing, however, an early essay with its later form, it may be seen how BACON's style improved. The expression is fuller and freer, and less aphoristic. Compare even the brief additions made in the later issues to the essay on "Studies," which appears in four texts, or better the final form of the essay on "Religion," first issued in 1612, the title of which was altered to "Of Unity in Religion" after revision in 1625.

I think a better idea of BACON's English style may be gotten from his 'History of Henry VII,' written most probably in 1621-2, soon after he went into retirement, and pronounced by the aged FULKE GREVILLE, LORD BROOKE, the friend of SIDNEY, to be "incomparable." In the 'History of Henry VII'—of which a good edition has been edited by the REV. MR. LUMBY (Pitt Press Series),—BACON treated a subject which had long occupied his mind. He was interested in it, and he wrote when his powers of mind were most vigorous, as he was not more than sixty years of age. He had here a fine field for the display of the excellencies of his style. The progress of historical composition may be seen by comparing BACON's work with the older chronicles, from two of which (HALL and GRAFTON) extracts are given by LUMBY, who says (p. viii): "The perusal of a few lines will suffice to show what a great stride had been made in English prose composition during the reign of Elizabeth, and



to what a degree of perfection it had been brought by the powers of such writers as Bacon and Hooker." The superior ease and finish, the naturalness of BACON'S style, strike us at once in the comparison.

RALEIGH had preceded BACON in the art of description and narration. His brief report of 'The Last Fight of the Revenge' (ed. ARBER) had been written in 1591, and his 'History of the World' was composed during his long imprisonment (1603-18). But RALEIGH'S style was not equal to BACON'S, notwithstanding some very beautiful descriptive passages. He frequently uses long sentences, strung together without discrimination and especially faulty in the treatment of that bane of the Elizabethan writers, the relative pronoun. RALEIGH'S style leaves the impression of crowding together into one sentence too many topics. Thoughts flow in upon each other, and clause is added to clause somewhat after the Sidneian manner. But in any essay on Elizabethan prose making pretension to more than a mere sketch, RALEIGH would deserve more space than can be spared for him here.

BACON'S narrative style may be illustrated by a few quotations. His logical mind knew how to arrange his thoughts systematically and to discriminate proportionately, and the style conforms to the thought. This may be seen at almost the very opening of his work. Discussing the King's title to the throne, he says (p. 7): "But King Henry, in the very entrance of his reign, and the instant of time when the kingdom was cast into his arms, met with a point of great difficulty, and knotty to solve, able to trouble and confound the wisest king in the newness of his estate; and so much the more, because it could not endure a deliberation, but must be at once deliberated and determined. There were fallen to his lot and concurrent in his person three several titles to the imperial crown. The first, the title of the lady Elizabeth, whom, by precedent pact with the party that brought him in, he was to marry. The second, the ancient and long disputed title, both by plea and arms, of the house of Lancaster, to which he was inheritor in his own person. The third, the title of the sword or conquest, for that he came in by victory of battle, and that the king in possession was slain in the field." Here all is clear, simple and compact, the punctuation alone differing somewhat from modern usage, but the language easy and expressive. After considering each of these titles to

the crown, BACON sums up the king's decision as follows, the sentence itself furnishing a good illustration of the way in which BACON managed the long sentence, intercalating subordinate clauses between subject and predicate, and adding participial and relative causes after the main predicate, thus uniting the periodic and the loose structure (p. 9): "But the king, out of the greatness of his own mind, presently cast the die; and the inconveniences appearing unto him on all parts, and knowing there could not be any interreign or suspension of title, and preferring his affection to his own line and blood, and liking that title best which made him independent; and being in his nature and constitution of mind not very apprehensive or forecasting of future events afar off, but an entertainer of fortune by the day; resolved to rest upon the title of Lancaster as the main, and to use the other two, that of marriage, and that of battle, but as supporters, the one to appease secret discontents, and the other to beat down open murmur and dispute; not forgetting that the same title of Lancaster had formerly maintained a possession of three descents in the crown; and might have proved a perpetuity, had it not ended in the weakness and inability of the last prince. Whereupon the king presently that very day, being the two and twentieth of August, assumed the style of king in his own name, without mention of the lady Elizabeth at all, or any relation thereunto. In which course he ever after persisted; which did spin him a thread of many seditions and troubles."

Here we feel inclined to split up and alter a little, especially to change the relatives, the grammatical dependence being thinly disguised by the old practice of putting a period before the relative, which modern usage will not permit. But whatever changes might be needed to give the sentence a more modern form, it cannot be denied that it is perfectly clear as it stands. It merely illustrates the Elizabethan tendency to put as many connected thoughts as possible into one sentence without regard to elegance of style. The sentence is cumbersome, without doubt, but easily intelligible. The insertion of the subject will sometimes mend BACON's sentence-structure, and the omission of the subject, especially when a relative, is also sometimes necessary, as in the following (p. 10): "For they thought generally, that he was a Prince, as ordained and sent down from heaven, to unite and put to an end the long dissensions of the two houses; which although they had had . . . lucid intervals

and happy pauses ; yet they did ever hang over the kingdom, ready to break forth into new perturbations and calamities."

We see then that BACON's grammar still leaves something to be desired to perfect the style. His vocabulary is, however, copious and idiomatic, and but little of it is even now obsolete. We meet with the archaisms, *whereupon*, *whereof*, *thereby*, *therewith*, *thereupon*, etc., characteristic of the time, *for that*, =because, *so as*=provided that, *long of*, as, "if this King did no greater matters, it was *long of* himself; for what he minded he compassed," and other such archaisms. Many Latinisms no longer current might be picked out, as *indubitate*, *ingenerate*, *habilitate* (adj.), *improprie*, *impoisoner*, etc.; some Romance words, as *disinherison*, *prest*=loan, and *spials*; a good English term *unlawed*, unfortunately lost, and many words used in senses different from their present meaning, as *power*=force of men (Shaksperian), *infinite*=numerous, *diffidence*=distrust, *reduce*=compel, *overcast*=overrate, *respective*=respectful, *sad*=grave, *pensive*=weighty, *concurrents*=contemporaries, *consort*=agreement, and others.

The last section of BACON's work, his description of the character of the King, is an excellent illustration of his style. The sentences are short and well constructed. The terms are chosen with skill to express each trait of character, habit and disposition of the man. The plainest and most idiomatic English is used. One paragraph alone must suffice for illustration, as it preserves a familiar idiom and an incident that is of interest (p. 218): "He was a Prince, sad, serious, and full of thoughts, and secret observations, and full of notes and memorials of his own hand, especially touching persons. As, whom to employ, whom to reward, whom to inquire of, whom to beware of, what were the dependencies, what were the factions, and the like; keeping, as it were, a journal of his thoughts. There is to this day a merry tale; that his monkey, set on as it was thought by one of his chamber, tore his principal note-book all to pieces, when by chance it lay forth; whereat the court, which liked not those pensive accounts, was almost tickled with sport." Whatever criticisms may be made of BACON's style, it was a great advance upon that of any one of his predecessors except HOOKER.

I cannot close this paper without a cursory glance at a writer who, on account of his distinction in another field of literature, has not occupied the position that he deserves as a writer of

English prose, "rare Ben Jonson." There is no better writer of Elizabethan prose than JONSON, and he marks a distinct advance upon BACON. MR. SAINTSBURY has well, though briefly, criticized his style (*op. cit. supra*, pp. 218-20), and MR. SWINBURNE has drawn attention to the value of his work in a recent article in the *Fortnightly Review* (July, 1888). There needs but a hasty perusal of his 'Timber: or Discoveries made upon Men and Matter,' to justify the prominence given to him as a writer of prose by these learned critics. The modernness of his style at once impresses the reader. SAINTSBURY rightly says:—"There can be no greater contrast than exists between the prose style usual at that time . . . and the straightforward, vigorous English of these *Discoveries*. They come, in character as in time, midway between Hooker and Dryden, and they incline rather to the more than to the less modern form." As to the value of JONSON'S prose work, MR. SWINBURNE remarks, with his accustomed hyperbole, "a single leaf of his *Discoveries* is worth all his lyrics, tragedies, elegies, and epigrams together." Of course he omits his comedies. BEN JONSON was not only a writer, but he was also a critic of English prose style. We shall look in vain for a better reasoned and better expressed treatise on style than that section of the 'Discoveries,' headed, with JONSON'S fondness for Latin titles, "*De stylo et optimo scribendi genere*" (ed. GIFFORD, ix, 212 ff. Partly quoted in SAINTSBURY'S 'English Prose'). He refers occasionally to QUINTILIAN, and, doubtless, was indebted to him for some of his thoughts, but his mode of expression was all his own. Although the length of this paper admonishes me to be brief, I cannot refrain from one or two quotations. JONSON begins: "For a man to write well, there are required three necessities: to read the best authors, observe the best speakers, and much exercise of his own style. In style, to consider what ought to be written, and after what manner; he must first think and excogitate his matter, then choose his words, and examine the weight of either. Then take care, in placing and ranking both matter and words, that the composition be comely, and to do this with diligence and often. No matter how slow the style be at first, so it be laboured and accurate; seek the best and be not glad of the froward conceits, or first words, that offer themselves to us; but judge of what we invent, and order what we approve." But one knows not where to stop a quotation from this excellent tract. What a pity that some of our modern

penny-a-liners have not read JONSON! Considering its subject, this brief essay is equal to anything in BACON, and, as to its style, it is far easier and simpler, much less quaint and archaic, —and JONSON died but eleven years after BACON.

Let us listen again to some of his pungent advice:—"But arts and precepts avail nothing, except nature be beneficial and aiding. And therefore these things are no more written to a dull disposition, than rules of husbandry to a soil. No precepts will profit a fool, no more than beauty will the blind, or music the deaf. As we should take care that our style in writing be neither dry nor empty; we should look again it be not winding, or wanton with far-fetched descriptions; either is a vice. But that is worse which proceeds out of want, than that which riots out of plenty. The remedy of fruitfulness is easy, but no labour will help the contrary; I will like and praise some things in a young writer; which yet, if he continue in, I cannot but justly hate him for the same." Notwithstanding the general ease of expression in this sentence, the peculiar Elizabethan use of the inevitable relative pronoun jars upon the ear attuned to grammatical precision.

Lastly, we may note how JONSON developed the precepts of HORACE and QUINTILIAN, and furnished a model for DR. CAMPBELL and his followers: "Custom is the most certain mistress of language, as the public stamp makes the current money. But we must not be too frequent with the mint, every day coining, nor fetch words from the extreme and utmost ages; since the chief virtue of a style is perspicuity, and nothing so vicious in it as to need an interpreter. Words borrowed of antiquity do lend a kind of majesty to style and are not without their delight sometimes. For they have the authority of years, and out of their intermission do win themselves a kind of grace-like newness. But the eldest of the present, and newness of the past language, is the best. For what was the ancient language, which some men so dote upon, but the ancient custom? Yet when I name custom, I understand not the vulgar custom; for that were a precept no less dangerous to language than life, if we should speak or live after the manners of the vulgar; but that I call custom of speech, which is the consent of the learned; as custom of life, which is the consent of the good." JONSON practises what he preaches. There is scarcely a word now obsolete in the whole essay on style. Occasionally we find one or two, as in the following, but their meaning is readily under-

stood in the connection : " Our style should be like a skein of silk, to be carried and found by the right thread, not ravelled and perplexed ; then all is a knot, a heap. There are words that do as much raise a style as others can depress it. Superlati-  
*tion* and overmuchness amplifies. It may be above faith, but never above a mean." While we might dispense with *superlati-  
tion*, it is a pity that we have lost the expressive *overmuchness*. This is a word after MR. FREEMAN'S own heart.

The chief fault I should find with JONSON'S style is one characteristic of all writers of the time, a tendency to ellipsis, especially ellipsis of the subject and of the substantive verb, which ellipses exist in SHAKSPERE *passim*. For clearness and smoothness of style, simplicity and purity of expression, correct structure and forcible balance of sentence, avoidance of cumbersome periods, which almost always lead in the Elizabethan writers to ungrammatical structure,—though JONSON recognizes that " periods are beautiful when they are not too long,"—for all these desirable qualities of a good prose style, we shall find no Elizabethan writer surpassing BEN JONSON. His liberal culture, his sound judgment, his " much exercise of his own style" in his dramatic writings, all contributed to place JONSON'S prose among the best of the period, and to furnish a standing example of the benefits conferred upon the language by its cultivation in the Elizabethan drama.

In the history of English prose style, it is " a far cry," from LYLY to JONSON, although they were contemporaries for thirty-three years, a full generation. In point of time, however, at least fifty years separate the ' Euphues ' and the ' Discoveries,' and the progress made in style during that period is correspondent. Still, apart from LYLY'S peculiar affectations and more archaic vocabulary and sentence-structure, it does not seem to me fanciful to find like simplicity and purity of expression in each. JONSON improved upon LYLY even more than LYLY had improved upon his predecessors, but I think that both may rightly be called, in the words of JOHN ELIOT, " raffineurs de l'Anglois."